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ABSTRACT

This report outlines plans to reduce the dropout rate of Detroit (Michigan) Public Schools from the present 45% to 34% by 1990. First, current efforts to improve pupil learning experiences and reduce the dropout rate are listed. These are divided into three types: (1) early interventions (identification of adjustment or learning problems and provision of intervention support services); (2) curriculum improvement (effective instruction and an emphasis on affective education); and (3) school-community partnerships (increased support from business, government, labor, media, civic organizations, universities, parents, churches, and other community groups). Next, 1986-87 planned dropout actions and unit responsibilities are briefly described, and five recommended dropout reduction plans are presented. Finally, proposed dropout strategies for three target populations (elementary schools, middle and high schools, and current dropouts, ages 16-19) are outlined. Appendices include fact sheets on three special programs and a list of possible performance standards for school level administrators relating to high risk students. (KH)

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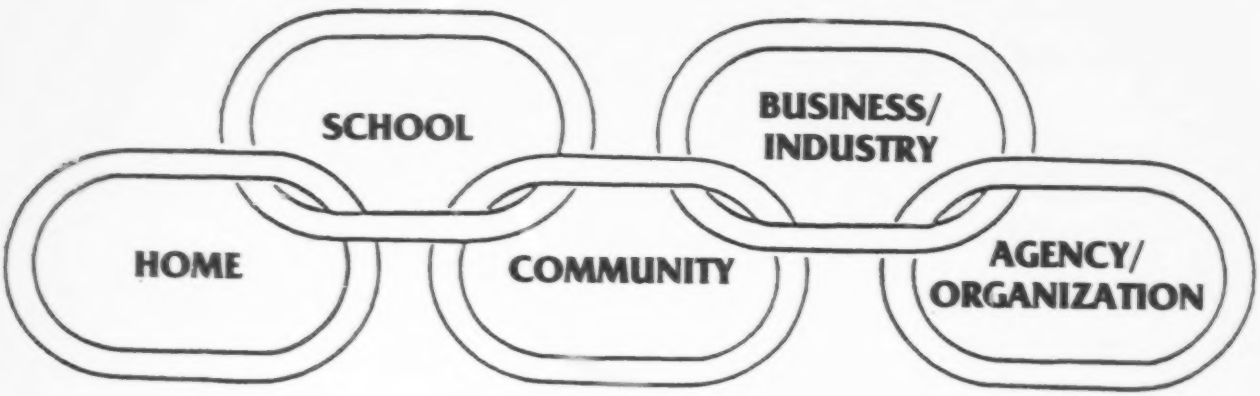
THE DROPOUT PREVENTION



LINK

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS PLAN FOR HIGH RISK STUDENTS

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THE DROPOUT PREVENTION LINK

Detroit Public Schools Plan for High Risk Students
Graduation - The Bottom Line

Prepared by:

Division of Educational Services
Office of Instructional Improvement
July, 1986

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FOREWORD

Dropout prevention is one of the high priorities of the Detroit Public Schools System and is being addressed on a multi-faceted front. It is an integral part of our districtwide Strategic Plan which is being implemented this fall. A major objective of this plan is to reduce our current dropout rate of 45% to 34% by 1990. The combined resources of central and area offices, our schools, and the community are being marshalled for a more targeted impact on our dropout problem.

Earlier this year, in cooperation with Channel 56, the local public broadcasting station, staff from all levels and the community met in town meetings at each of our 22 comprehensive high schools to address dropout concerns. Several recommendations were made by the town meeting groups which the district is acting upon.

In Detroit, a dropout is defined as a student who leaves school for any reason other than the following: (1) graduation, (2) transfer to another program (for example: out of district, another Detroit high school, or non-GED night school program), or (3) death. Based on that definition, a computer-generated report on individual school and district dropout status is prepared annually.

Approaches currently underway or planned to reduce our dropout rate are described in the following two sections: (1) Current Dropout Prevention Efforts and (2) Dropout Plans for 1986-87.

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CURRENT DROPOUT PREVENTION EFFORTS

This section describes some of the multiple approaches currently being employed to improve pupil learning experiences and reduce our dropout rate. They are listed under three major priority areas: Early Intervention, Curriculum Improvement, and School-Community Partnerships. Included are both current programs and those planned as part of the school district Strategic Plan.

Early Intervention

Our main emphasis here is to identify adjustment or learning problems early and to provide the necessary intervention support services. For example:

- Pre-school and extended day kindergarten programs have been expanded.
- Class size has been reduced in the early elementary grades.
- Remedial support services are provided for students needing additional help in the learning of basic skills.
- Procedures are in place for the early identification of students who send early signals that they are in need of supportive services, e.g., counseling, social work, psychological.
- Counselors are assigned on the basis of one for every two elementary schools to assist in the early identification and remediation of students evidencing problems.
- Detroit Attendance Intervention Centers are housed in several Detroit high schools to provide intensive academic and counseling support for students with poor attendance patterns.
- Eastside and Westside Middle School Development Centers have been established as alternative schools for students who have difficulty adjusting in regular school settings. A High School Development Center will be opened this fall. (See attached descriptions of the middle school and high school centers.)
- Pre-school programs are being developed for four-year old children who are siblings of middle school students experiencing significant academic and/or behavioral difficulties.
  (See attachment.)
- Five vocational/technical centers offer high school students learning experiences which develop saleable skills for employment and/or preparation for further learning in colleges or technical schools.
- The district is exploring the feasibility of developing Individual Learning Plans to provide individualized remedial learning experiences for students who fail to master grade level skills.
- Our Citywide Attendance Policies and Student Code of Conduct facilitate the early identification and intervention process.

- At the high school level, parents are notified weekly of excessive student absenteeism, including in-school truancy.

- Continuing efforts are being made to strengthen and expand our Student Information System data base to provide more timely and useful information for early identification and intervention purposes.

- A Detroit Guidance Program Model utilizes several different approaches to assist students including individual counseling, career counseling, and cross-age counseling.

- At the high school level, students are assigned to designated 9th grade counselors with special counseling attention given to high-risk students.

- Group counseling programs, such as Twelve Together, assist potential dropouts to overcome adjustment problems and successfully complete their high school studies.

Curriculum Improvement

Our heavy emphasis on curriculum improvement reflects our belief that the delivery of effective instruction for students in the basic skills, and in other areas which provide a balanced curriculum, is the most essential strategy for improving pupil learning and reducing our dropouts. We are also placing increasing emphasis on affective education which focuses on such areas as self-esteem, self-direction, attitudes, values, and interpersonal relationships. Following are some examples of these curriculum improvement efforts.

- Curriculum scope and sequence strands for all grades and content areas have been identified to provide a district framework for strengthening pupil learning across the curriculum.

- Our affective education plan treats the personal, social, aesthetic and appreciation dimensions of learning with focus on several key areas of need such as high achievement expectations, the needs of Black male students, and school climate improvement.

- Programs such as the Efficacy Program and Black Judges Program provide high school students with role models in encouraging student development of positive self-images and the reaching of their fullest potential.

- Programs such as QUEST at the middle school level and Choices for Positive Living at the elementary school level help students develop improved interpersonal and problem solving skills for use both inside and outside of school.

- Our district plan for promoting the learning of student thinking supports our dropout prevention efforts through the development of student skills in such areas as problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, creative thinking, and learning how to learn.

- Human sexuality and substance abuse instruction is incorporated into the scope and sequence of our health education curriculum and reinforced in other content areas such as science and social studies.

- Programs for pregnant girls at three centers assist students to continue their education while providing child care support.

- Our School Improvement Planning process at each school provides the framework for school level focus of resources in areas which impact on dropout reduction, e.g., student achievement, school climate, safety and security, guidance and counseling, school-community relations, and attendance improvement.

School-Community Partnerships

For several years, various community groups have worked cooperatively with the district in support of our school improvement efforts. We are now actively soliciting increased community support from business, government, labor, media, civic organizations, universities, parents, churches, and other community groups. This process reinforces our belief that the dropout problem is everyone's concern and that cooperative school-community action is needed for solving the problem. Following are some examples of current efforts and plans:

- Our School Community Relations Program: Policy and Procedures for the '80's provides a framework and procedure for active community participation at the school, area, and district levels.

- Active Local School Community Organizations are operational in all of our schools in support of local school improvement.

- The press, radio and television are communicating our message on the dropout issue as exemplified by the recent Channel 56 sponsored "Classroom Partners" town meetings in our high schools and follow-up documentary television programs. Similarly, our internal media staff have provided communication linkages with the community on district dropout efforts as evidenced by the March, 1986 publication of Visions which highlighted the dropout issue.

- Several partnerships have been established with business, universities, and other groups to impact on improving pupil learning. More than 40 organizations are currently offering career and vocational training to our students. Several schools are involved in adopt-a-school programs. Many of these linkages were formed as a direct result of the district's New Directions thrust for promoting business/school partnerships.

- Plans currently being formulated call for expanding parent and community involvement through such approaches as 1) more active participation at the school, area, and district level, 2) providing parenting classes, 3) more effectively disseminating information on district policies, school expectations, parent-teacher conferences, and homework, and 4) utilizing school facilities for expanded community outreach purposes.

DROPOUT PLANS FOR 1986-87

In addition to continuing current efforts to reduce our dropout rate, a major dropout prevention thrust will be launched during the 1986-87 school year. These plans target specific populations. Implementation will be accomplished, in large measure, with existing resources. Some present priorities and responsibilities will be redirected. Actions to be taken and unit responsibilities are described below.

Action	Responsibility
1. Review suspension procedure to reduce transfers of students from school to school. Provide for in-school suspensions of first time violators and less serious violators, especially those students with good attendance and achievement records.	Code of Student Conduct Area G and high school administrators
2. Expand and enhance the present early intervention program in the elementary school. Conduct appropriate in-service training activities to assist administrators, teachers and other support personnel.	Pupil Personnel Services Staff Development
3. Develop performance standards for principals, assistant principals, department heads, counselors and school-community agents for reducing the dropout rate in the school/units for which they are responsible. (See attached examples.)	Human Resource Management and Development Cabinet/Labor Affairs
4. Develop a training program for parents of "high-risk" students.	School Community Relations Area offices and schools
5. Develop a community outreach program in conjunction with ministerial groups and public agencies to disseminate information about dropout programs, parental training programs, and community involvement activities which focus on dropout prevention.	School Community Relations Area offices Community-based organizations
6. Use the School Improvement Plan to have each school develop specific activities to reduce student absenteeism and the dropout rate.	Instructional Improvement Area offices and schools

Action	Responsibility
7. Develop an in-depth 9th grade articulation program for 8th grade students moving to the high schools.	Federal, State and Local Legislative Affairs Curriculum Development and Services Instructional Improvement
8. Plan transition activities for students leaving elementary grades and entering middle school.	Pupil Personnel Services Area offices
9. Use information available from the SIS more effectively to identify the following:	Instructional Improvement Pupil Personnel Services Data Processing Area G
a. Students transferring to 9th grade whose records indicate they are at-risk. These students will be closely monitored for poor attendance, in-school absenteeism or poor marks with immediate intervention provided by counselors and others.	
b. Schools where in-school truancy and/or dropouts are significantly above the median.	
c. Classrooms in which excessive in-school truancy or dropouts are occurring.	
d. Students having received prior support services.	
e. Students who have been attending school and doing well academically but who suddenly show a drastic change in behavior.	
f. Students who have dropped out of school.	
10. Develop specific follow-up activities for each of the above target populations.	Same as above

	Action	Responsibility
11.	Implement the Instrumental Enrichment Program for compensatory education classes to strengthen the linkage between basic education, compensatory education and special education.	Curriculum Development and Services Special Education Federal, State and Local Legislative Affairs Area offices
12.	Open vocational-technical high schools to at-risk 9th graders in order to provide alternative learning experiences.	Office of the General Superintendent Vocational-Technical administrators Area G Curriculum Development and Services
13.	Review the evaluations of existing DPS dropout programs to determine what modifications should be made, which programs should be expanded and/or dropped.	Cabinet and units involved
14.	Provide health screening, especially for "high-risk" students, and make referrals to appropriate health care providers.	Curriculum Development and Services Area offices
15.	Revise booklet titled, "Early Identification of Students Who May Develop Serious Problems." Disseminate to all teachers, counselors and administrators.	Pupil Personnel Services
16.	Prepare a booklet similar to the above for parents to help them understand the characteristics of "high-risk" students. Disseminate this information through the local school-community organizations.	Pupil Personnel Services School Community Relations
17.	Prepare a "Blueprint of Success" plan for all students who have failed.	Curriculum Development and Services

	Action	Responsibility
18.	Involve "high-risk" students in programs and projects that provide increased opportunities for success.	Area offices School administrators
19.	Examine and explore all programs that involve student participation, such as cross-age tutoring, peer group counseling, student councils. Redirect some of these programs in order to deal positively with the "high-risk" student.	Pupil Personnel Services School Community Relations School administrators Curriculum Development and Services
20.	Send a letter from the General Superintendent to parents of middle school students. Emphasize the importance of students successfully completing their basic education and remind parents of the important role they play in this critical adolescent stage of development.	Office of the General Superintendent
21.	Develop a systemwide in-service program for staff dealing with beliefs, attitudes and expectations. Invite a consultant, such as Dr. Asa Hilliard, to work with Detroit for a year to accomplish this goal.	Staff Development
22.	Reinstitute mandated in-service sessions for administrators at the Staff Development Academy. Systematically train all administrators at each level in areas that deal with "high-risk" students, such as: a. The effects of affective education on student retention; b. Strategies for dealing with "high-risk" students at the elementary, middle and senior high school levels; c. How to identify a "high-risk" student and steps to take to assist him/her;	Staff Development

Action	Responsibility
d. Resources available to local school administrators for helping them deal with "high-risk" students;	
e. How to write a lesson plan for a student who has failed;	
f. Successful programs to be implemented for dealing with "high-risk" students;	
g. Putting together successful articulation programs, elementary to middle school and middle to senior high school.	
23. Provide opportunities for students going from elementary to middle school and middle to high school to get complete physical examinations.	Educational Services
24. Create a task force to concentrate its efforts on bringing students back to school. Focus will be on students in the 16-19 age bracket.	Area G Office Adult Education School Community Relations
25. Ensure that follow-up procedures for the weekly attendance system are enforced.	Area G Attendance Guidance and Counseling

RECOMMENDED DROPOUT REDUCTION PLANS FOR 1986-87

1. Continue current dropout prevention efforts described on pp. 1-3 of The Dropout Prevention Link. Strengthen and expand, as needed.

2. Appropriate units review, and implement as feasible, the recommended actions proposed on pp. 4-8 of The Dropout Prevention Link.

3. Include performance standards in administrator performance review system plans similar to those proposed on Attachment D of The Dropout Prevention Link.

4. Implement proposed dropout plan strategies for three target populations:

   a. Elementary students who have failed one or more grades or who are overage for their grade.

   b. Students in the 8th grade and new 9th graders with a "C" average or above who have shown evidence in the past year of becoming potential dropouts as indicated by spotty attendance; in-school truancy; abrupt drop in report card marks, homework and/or classroom assignments; or behavioral problems.

   c. Students between the ages of 16-19 who have dropped out of school in the past year.

5. Establish a Dropout Prevention Collaborative to develop a comprehensive district dropout prevention plan using Ford Foundation funding.

PROPOSED DROPOUT STRATEGIES FOR THREE TARGET POPULATIONS

GOAL AREA 1: ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Target Population: Elementary school students who have failed one or more grades or who are overage for their grade.

Rationale: Most students who are overage for their grade will drop out of school by the time they reach age 16. Students who are at grade level and who can achieve at that level generally stay in school.

Strategies (Examples):

Schools

1. Identify target students using the list provided by Information Systems and a review of the Form 80's.
2. Develop an Individualized Learning Plan for each target pupil which may encompass:
    a. Compensatory education classes
    b. Tutoring
    c. Counseling
    d. Computer assisted instruction
    e. Ancillary support services, e.g., psychological, social work, attendance.
3. Conduct workshops for addressing the needs of target students for staff and for parents of target students.
4. Conduct regularly scheduled meetings with parents of target students.
5. Develop a summer school program to result in the promotion of target students to grade level for their age.

Area Offices

1. Provide leadership in orienting and guiding area staff and principals in focusing school level support on target students.
2. Monitor and assist schools in implementing designated strategies.

Central Offices

1. Provide schools with a list of target pupils. (Information Systems)
2. Prepare inservice training materials for use by schools for staff and parent training. (Staff Dev., Curriculum, Sch. Comm. Rel.)
3. Prepare special remedial reading and mathematics instructional support materials for target students. (Curriculum)
4. Provide ongoing support to schools in implementing plans for target students. (All units, as needed)

GOAL AREA 2: MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS

Target Population: Students in the 8th grade and new ninth graders with a "C" average or above who have shown evidence in the past year of becoming potential dropouts as indicated by:

1. Spotty attendance
2. In-school truancy
3. Abrupt decline in report card marks, homework and/or classroom assignments
4. Behavioral problems.

Rationale: There is a population of students who drop out of school who do not meet the dropout profile in terms of prior failures, poor school work or being overage. Almost all of these students should be able to continue their previous success in school if immediate early intervention action is taken.

Strategies (Examples):

Schools

1. Using the SIS list and Form 80's, identify a specific target population that can be monitored and serviced by counselors, department heads, compensatory staff, teachers and attendance offices.
2. Develop and implement a plan of intervention for target students which may encompass:
    a. Self contained or intervention rooms for students who skip classes
    b. Peer tutoring
    c. Remedial or "catch up" assistance
    d. Home contacts
    e. Group and individual counseling
    f. Scheduled meetings with supportive teachers
    g. Compensatory education services.

Area Offices

1. Provide leadership in orienting and guiding area staff and principals in focusing school level support on target students.
2. Assist building administrators in developing plans for their target students, e.g., staffing of intervention rooms, instructional assistance.
3. Monitor and assist schools in implementing designated strategies.

Central Offices

1. Provide ongoing SIS reports to schools on in-school truancy, absenteeism and report card marks. (Information Systems)
2. Conduct training sessions on pupil support strategies to be utilized with the target population. (Pupil Personnel Services)
3. Provide ongoing support to schools in implementing plans for target students. (All units, as needed)

GOAL AREA 3: CURRENT DROPOUTS, AGES 16-19

Target Population: Students between the ages of 16-19 who have dropped out of school in the past year.

Rationale: There is a significant number of pupils who drop out of school due to pregnancy, the need to work, who fail courses and for other reasons. Some of these students need only a few courses for graduation. Many of these students would re-enroll in day school or enter evening school programs with appropriate guidance help and knowledge of program offerings.

Strategies: (Examples):

Schools

1. Using the list provided by Information Systems and current school dropout records, contact students who live in the school attendance area at specified intervals to provide information about available programs and to encourage reentry into a day or evening school program.
2. Support the districts media campaign for dropout reentry in outreach efforts, e.g., newsletter, home visits, community meetings.

Area/Central Offices

1. Provide Adult Education and the evening and day school principals with lists of dropouts indicating name, address, grade and the last school attended. (Information Systems)
2. Mount a dropout reentry media campaign for dissemination throughout the commmunity, e.g., t.v. spots, bus posters, brochures and posters, dropout telephone "hot line." (Adult Education, School Community Relations, Media Relations, Educational Broadcasting)
3. Form a task force in conjunction with Ford Foundation funded Dropout Prevention Collaborative to examine policies, procedures and practices, and to make recommendations for a comprehensive plan to impact this target population. (Ofc. Gen. Supt.)

Attachment A

FACT SHEET

NAME OF PROJECT	:	Detroit's Middle School Developmental Centers
TARGET POPULATION:		Middle school students recommended for the alternative program by local middle school principals. Students recommended include those experiencing attendance and academic problems.
SCHOOL SITE	:	Monteith and Lyster
ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITY	:	Office of Pupil Personnel Services
STAFFING	:	2 Administrators 2 Unit Heads 18 Teachers 2 Counselors 2 Social Workers 1 Psychologist 6 School Service Assistants 2 Security Guards
PURPOSE	:	To provide supplementary pupil personnel services and remedial academic services to the target student in an alternative school setting. The overall objective of the intervention program is to provide participating students with the coping and academic skills needed for return to the regular school as full participants in the educational process.

FACT SHEET

NAME OF PROJECT:		Detroit's High School Developmental Center
TARGET POPULATION	:	Three hundred ninth and tenth grade students recommended for the Developmental High School pilot program by the principals of the participating high schools. Students recommended include those experiencing academic, and/or attendance/adjustment problems.
PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS	:	Cody, Cooley, Ford, Mackenzie, and Redford
SCHOOL SITE	:	Ruddiman
ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITY	:	Assistant Superintendent, Office of Pupil Personnel Services and Area Superintendent of Area G
STAFFING	:	1 Administrator-In-Charge 3 Unit Heads 15 Teachers 1 Math Specialist 1 Reading Specialist 3 Counselors 1 Liaison Counselor 4 Paraprofessionals 4 Secretaries 2 Security Guards
PURPOSE	:	To assist unsuccessful students to be self-sufficient and self-directed through a program which provides work experience and academic and social/psychological support services in an alternative school which offers smaller classes taught by teachers who have been trained to work with students who have serious social and academic problems.
HOURS OF OPERATION	:	Academic Schedule - 3:30 P.M. to 9:15 P.M. Work Schedule - 4 hours A.M.

FACT SHEET

NAME OF PROJECT	:	DPS Preschool Program for Children at Risk
TARGET POPULATION:		Four year old children who are siblings of middle school students experiencing significant academic and/or behavioral difficulties and those of adolescent parents.
PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS	:	All middle and high schools
ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITY	:	Office of Curriculum Development and Services
STAFFING	:	5 Social Workers (½ time) 1 Teacher 2 School Service Assistants 1 Noon Hour Aide 1 Work Study Assistant
PURPOSE	:	The Office of Curriculum Development and Services will use the funds to develop a model for identifying and recruiting preschool age children at-risk as well as for providing services that respond to the specific needs of the targeted children and their parents.

Examples of Possible Performance Standards for School Level Administrators Relating to High Risk Students

1. A sub-committee of the Local School Community Organization will be established to make recommendations and assist in the implementation of programs for high risk students.

2. Twenty "high risk" students will be identified and special support and assistance provided for them by the entire staff.

3. An individualized learning plan will be developed for all students who have failed a grade.

4. School attendance for 45 of the 50 students with the poorest attendance record will be improved.

5. A "crisis committee" will be established to diagnose, plan and implement strategies for 10 students who habitually disrupt classes.

6. An adopt-a-student program will be established in which each staff member will give special attention to one identified "high risk" student.

7. At least five special activities will be planned each semester for high risk students to provide them with positive school experiences.

8. High risk students who are experiencing difficulty in their academic work will be provided with special tutoring support.

9. The school dropout rate will be reduced from 14% to 12%.

10. The attendance rate for 9th grade students will increase from 75% to 80%.

11. The failure rate for students in English, social studies, and mathematics classes will decrease by 10% each.

12. The School Improvement Plan will include at least two objectives, with supportive strategies, which impact directly on strengthening learning experiences and increasing school holding power for high risk students.

13. At least three specially designed programs and/or strategies will be implemented to reduce the school dropout rate.

14. Peer, staff, and community tutoring services will be provided for students identified as potential grade failures or school dropouts.

15. Specified procedures will be in place to use statistical profiles to provide immediate early intervention services for high risk students.

16. At least three inservice training sessions will be conducted for staff with resultant outcomes impacting the improvement of learning experiences for high risk students.

17. Students identified as high risk will receive immediate counseling, and other appropriate pupil personnel services, with recommendations made for alternative support services or learning experiences.

18. At least three major educational experiences to facilitate the transition from the elementary to middle school (or middle school to high school) will be provided for the 10% of entering students identified to be at highest risk as potential dropouts.

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